



Commonwealth of Kentucky
Office of the Governor

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**Gov. Beshear, Congressman Yarmuth announce \$1.6 million
in domestic violence/sexual assault victim services grants**

*Grants include \$170,000 in funds for electronic program to expedite issuance
of domestic violence/ emergency protection orders*

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (April 12, 2010) – Gov. Steve Beshear and Congressman John Yarmuth (KY-3) today announced \$1.6 million in federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus funds for 22 programs to support victims of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual assault.

“We are pleased to be able to assist communities across the Commonwealth address the unique needs of domestic violence and sexual assault victims,” Gov. Beshear said. “Even with vigorous enforcement against perpetrators, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault may have many related legal, economic and social issues that these funds help address by providing shelter, support and other vital services.”

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grants promote a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to enhancing advocacy and improving the criminal justice system's response to violent crimes against women.

Recipients include domestic violence shelters; law enforcement; prosecution; statewide coalitions providing training and technical assistance to diverse recipients; and other complementary service providers.

“Nearly one-third of all American women report being abused at some point in their lives – a tragic figure that has a toll on our families, communities and economy,” said Congressman John Yarmuth, of Louisville. “With millions reporting abuse each year and the cost of domestic violence draining more than \$700 million in productivity from our businesses annually, Recovery Act investments like these will go a long way toward protecting Louisville families and providing financial security.”

Among the projects funded is an electronic communications system to review and approve domestic violence and emergency protection orders (EPO). The electronic communications system, to be piloted in Jefferson County with the potential to be expanded statewide, will vastly speed up the approval of the orders, which under the current system can take hours or even days to execute. The \$170,000 award was made to the Louisville Metro Criminal Justice Commission.

“Expediency is a critical factor for individuals seeking protection from an abuser and this grant will eliminate time as an impediment to approving a protective or domestic violence order,” Gov. Beshear said. “This system will not only improve efficiency, but will heighten accountability and strengthen the community safety net of protection for victims of domestic violence.”

The commission will develop the electronic system utilizing the existing e-Warrant infrastructure, and work with Jefferson County Circuit Clerk David Nicholson, the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security and others to implement the program and train staff on using the computerized process.

Individuals seeking an EPO often face a lengthy, antiquated and inefficient process, which relies on paper copies and sometimes causes the victim to wait a long period of time for judicial review and approval. Under the new system, a petition will be sent electronically to a judge who can provide an electronic signature and approve the order within minutes. Once served, the EPO will be electronically available to law enforcement via mobile data computers.

Gov. Beshear said the system will be up and running by February 2011.

“The electronic emergency protection order system is going to streamline the process in a way that is beneficial for everyone involved. It puts time on the side of the victim seeking protection,” said Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson. “We are proud to pilot a program here in Jefferson County that will eventually help victims of domestic violence across the Commonwealth.”

“Ideally, this technology will make it possible for Emergency Protection Orders to be available to law enforcement before the victim leaves the building,” said Circuit Court Clerk David Nicholson. “Electronic EPOs will give Jefferson County an additional tool to fight domestic violence that few other jurisdictions currently possess.”

The commission will coordinate the new technology with AOC to ensure data can be exchanged with KyCourts, the case management system for the courts. Once the project is online in Jefferson County, the parties will explore whether there is funding available to expand the program across the state.

“I’m pleased that the court system and criminal justice community are joining forces on this pilot project in Jefferson County,” said Laurie K. Dudgeon, director of the AOC. “Moving the EPO/DVO petition process from paper to an electronic platform will be a great leap forward in our ability to protect those affected by domestic violence.”